

THROPP COMPANY ASHCOM QUARRY
(New Enterprise Stone & Lime Company)
S of US Rte. 30 off SR 1004
Ashcom
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-346

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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Location: S of US Rte. 30 off SR 1004
Ashcom
Bedford County
Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1890s

Present Owner: New Enterprise Stone and Lime Company

Present Use: Quarry

Significance: Developed in the early 1900s in connection with local ironmaker Joseph E. Thropp, limestone from this quarry was used as flux in the blast furnace for the production of pig iron. Many such quarries in southwestern Pennsylvania were developed in the nineteenth and twentieth century in connection with the region's iron and steel industry. During construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in the late 1930s and early 1940s, the New Enterprise Lime and Stone Company constructed a cement mill and concrete batch plant at the quarry site. It continues in operation though on a much reduced scale.

Historian: Kim E. Wallace, 1994

Project Information: The results of the study of Bedford County were published in 1994: Kim E. Wallace (ed), Bedford County and Fulton County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service). The contents of the publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress as individual reports. Research notes, field photos and copies of historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

This is an extensive and active quarrying and stone-processing complex. On the east side of the complex, SR 1004 passes through the plant under an overhead conveyor to the crusher. Access to the quarry is through a private underpass under the Pennsylvania Turnpike. Here stone for road construction is sorted and distributed into piles graded according to state department of transportation standards.

The limestone quarry at Ashcom was probably used in the nineteenth century by local farmers who burned it in kilns for use as fertilizer. In 1903 Joseph E. Thropp began using it to supply his Earlston Iron Furnace, about a half-mile to the east. According to a former Ashcom resident, the initial contract for the quarrying was with James Isett of the Pittsburgh Stone and Lime Company of Williamsport, Pa. Dewalt Leisinger built a grist mill on Cove Creek at Ashcom in 1826. Benjamin R. Ashcom purchased and expanded the mill in the latter half of the century and his name became associated with the place. The Bedford and Bridgeport Railroad maintained a small station at Ashcom between the Lutzville and Mt. Dallas stations. Benjamin Ashcom built a brick mansion with a Second Empire roof on the west side of the mill and there were a few other farm houses nearby. When quarrying became more intensive and a second quarry was opened across the road from the first, Thropp's company built houses along the north side of Cove Creek for the additional workers. Each house had a yard and garden extending to the creek and was surrounded by a white picket fence. Bungalows were later built on the south side of the creek with wire fences around their yards. Superintendent Isett's house was located at the east end of the village. A common water supply was piped from a spring to a faucet in the center of the village. A one-room school called Mt. Spruce was located on a hill southeast of the village.

The Earlston Furnace closed when Thropp's company went bankrupt in 1924. The Ashcom quarry was eventually sold to the New Enterprise Stone and Lime Company in 1934. The company was founded by Jerry S. and son Paul I. Detwiler and originally sold crushed lime and burned lime from a quarry at Waterside in South Woodbury Township. By 1941 all four of Jerry Detwiler's sons had joined the company and they had acquired a quarry at Roaring Spring in southern Blair County in addition to the one at Ashcom. During the 1930s the Detwilers began specializing in supplying materials for road construction and also contracted to carry out construction projects. In the late 1930s the location of the Ashcom plant proved very strategic for fulfilling contracts for construction of the Pennsylvania Turnpike which passed just north of the plant. The company supplied cement, sand, and crushed stone for the turnpike's roads, bridges, and tunnels. Two ready-mix batch plants were set up at Ashcom to supply concrete for turnpike bridges.

All of the houses in the village of Ashcom were eventually torn down. According to a former resident, they were made uninhabitable by the dust from the rock crushers New Enterprise installed at the site. The Ashcom Mill is the only surviving building that predates the Thropp quarry. It has been incorporated into the plant complex and is used for storage.

New Enterprise Stone and Lime continues to use the site on a much reduced scale. The company is now headquartered at Roaring Spring and is one of the largest industries in the region. It owns operations in eleven Pennsylvania counties and three neighboring states.

Sources:

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